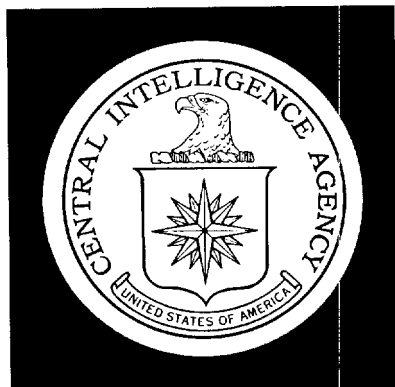


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SOUTH VIETNAM: The government is making little headway in its fight against drugs in Saigon.

Opium dens in Saigon and Cholon continue to operate, and the number of Vietnamese addicts has increased since the anti-drug campaign last June.

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[redacted] prices for narcotics have increased sharply in recent months, primarily because of tighter customs controls and the larger sums now required to bribe government officials. Prices are expected to drop soon, however, after the government relaxes its pressures.

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One of the main problems for Saigon has been the involvement of many top government officials in narcotics smuggling and sales inside South Vietnam.

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[redacted] blames the program's meager results on high-level footdragging and the government's reluctance to go after officials suspected of protecting drug traffickers. The few drug traders who have been arrested can usually bribe the authorities for a release, or they get light sentences if convicted.

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[redacted] So long as this continues, the control program is likely to be ineffective in reducing the country's increasing narcotics traffic.

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